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COMMUNICATION OF 10 SEPTEMBER 1998 RECEIVED FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BELARUS TO THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

The texts of a letter dated 10 September 1998 and of a memorandum submitted by the Government of the Republic of Belarus which the Director General has received from the Permanent Mission of Belarus are - as requested - reproduced for the attention of the General Conference.

"With reference to the Secretariat's Note N3.31.3-BYE of 4 September 1998 concerning our unpaid contributions to the IAEA Regular Budget and possible suspension of our voting rights at the 42nd IAEA General Conference I have the honour to forward herewith a Memorandum of the Government of the Republic of Belarus on this matter. It explains a difficult financial situation of my country and requests the General Conference to take into consideration existing circumstances and to allow our delegation to vote at the 42nd General Conference.

I kindly ask you to issue this Memorandum and the attached information as an official document of the General Conference."

For reasons of economy, this document has been printed in a limited number.
Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies of documents to meetings.

Memorandum from the Government of the Republic of Belarus

In connection with Belarus' arrears of payment to the IAEA's budget, the Government of the Republic of Belarus has the honour to communicate the following.

The process of restructuring the economy, aimed at reducing the dependence on external suppliers for energy resources and at creating competitive export potential, is causing a complex economic situation in Belarus. Moreover, the position is exacerbated by the heavy financial burden which the Republic of Belarus has to bear in connection with the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. As a result of the accident at Chernobyl nuclear power plant, Belarus suffered 70% of all the radioactive fallout. Radioactive caesium contaminated almost a quarter of its territory. More than 264 000 hectares of fertile land was taken out of use which caused tremendous damage to major sectors of the Republic's economy such as agriculture and forestry. The total cost to Belarus calculated over the 30-year period to the year 2015 for dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster will amount to 235 billion US dollars.

Over the last 12 years the Government of Belarus has been forced to allocate considerable sums from its budget to deal with the consequences of the biggest radiation accident of the 20th century. Ever since the disaster the Government of the Republic of Belarus has paid out a considerable proportion of its budget each year on compensation for material damage, treatment of the increasing number of cases of cancer, and psychological rehabilitation of the country's population.

The Government of the Republic of Belarus has launched a national programme to minimize the consequences of Chernobyl. As part of this effort a whole series of measures is being undertaken in the country to deal with the consequences of the accident.

Another reason for the Republic of Belarus' arrears with the Agency was the unjustified decision by the United Nations General Assembly at its 47th session in 1992 to increase Belarus' assessed contribution to the United Nations Regular Budget by a factor of more than one and a half, which was automatically reflected in the scale of its contribution to the budgets of the specialized agencies, including the IAEA. Moreover, until 1996 Belarus belonged to the group of "unshielded" States for calculation of its contribution to the Agency's safeguards budget.

Since the Agency's inception, the Republic of Belarus has always fulfilled its financial obligations to the Agency. It is only the extremely difficult economic situation in which Belarus has found itself in recent years for reasons beyond its control associated with the need to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, coupled with the disregard in the case of Belarus of the principle that a State's contribution should match its real ability to pay, that has resulted in its being in arrears with its contributions to the Agency.

In spite of the above problems, the Government of the Republic of Belarus has managed to contribute around US $1 300 000 to the Agency's Regular Budget in 1998. It is the first time in seven years that the Republic of Belarus has paid such a large sum to the Agency. Moreover, the Republic of Belarus has taken the necessary steps to pay the assessed programme costs for Agency technical co-operation for Belarus for the years 1990 to 1997 (around US $95 000) and has also contributed US $100 100 to the Agency's Technical Co-operation Fund for 1998. The Republic of Belarus will also do everything in its power in future to fulfil its financial obligations to the Agency.

The Government of the Republic of Belarus requests the delegations of Member States at the forty-second session of the Agency's General Conference to take the above circumstances into account and give favourable consideration to the question of maintaining Belarus' voting rights at the Agency's General Conference.[*] Such a decision by the Agency's Member States with regard to the Republic of Belarus - a State which has been subject to extreme radioactive contamination - would be in line with the spirit of the United Nations General Assembly resolution "Strengthening of international co-operation and co-ordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", adopted in December 1997 (text attached).

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[*] It is suggested that, pursuant to Rule 42(b) of the Conference's Rules of Procedure and in line with past practice, this request be referred to the General Committee for consideration.

52/172 Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Date: 16 December 1997 Meeting: 73

Adopted without a vote Draft: A752/L.33/Rev.I and Add. I

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming, its resolutions 45/190 of 21 December 1990,46/150 of 18 December 1991,47/165 of 18 December 1992, 48/206 of 21 December 1993, and 50/134 of 20 December 1995, and taking note of the decisions adopted by the organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system in the implementation of those resolutions,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolutions 1990/50 of 13 July 1990, 1991/51 of 26 July 1991 and 1992/38 of 30 July 1992 and Council decision 1993/232 of 22 July 1993,

Noting with appreciation the contribution made by States and by organizations of the United Nations system to the development of cooperation to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and the activities of regional and other organizations, in particular the Commission of the European Communities, as well as bilateral activities and those of non-governmental organizations,

Welcoming the commitments made by Member States in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, 154/ to intensify cooperation, inter alia, in the prevention and reduction of major technological and other disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, and in disaster relief and post- disaster rehabilitation in order to enhance the capabilities of affected countries to cope with such situations, as well as commitments made in response to the appeal of the Secretary-General on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident,

Conscious of the long-term nature of the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which was a major technological catastrophe in terms of its scope and created humanitarian, environmental, social, economic and health consequences and problems of common concern, requiring for their solution wide and active international cooperation and coordination of efforts in this field at the international and national levels,

Expressing profound concern about the ongoing effects on the lives and health of people, in particular children, in the affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as in other countries affected by the Chernobyl disaster,

Taking into consideration the findings and outcome of the United Nations needs-assessment mission to the affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in May 1997, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the United Nations-sponsored international seminar on the theme "Chernobyl and beyond: humanitarian assistance to victims of technological disasters", held in Moscow in May 1997,

Noting the readiness of Ukraine in principle to close the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by 2000, bearing in mind the need for adequate support from relevant countries and international organizations for that purpose,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/134, 155/

1. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions and, through existing coordination mechanisms, in particular the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl, to continue to maintain close cooperation with the agencies of the United Nations system, as well as with regional and other relevant organizations, with a view to encouraging the regular exchange of information, cooperation and coordination of multilateral and bilateral efforts in those areas, while implementing programmes and specific projects, inter alia, in the framework of relevant agreements and arrangements;

2. Invites States, in particular donor States, relevant multilateral financial institutions and other concerned parties of the international community, including non-governmental organizations, to continue to provide support to the ongoing efforts made by Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster;

3. Welcomes the decision of the Heads of State and Government of the seven major industrial States and the European Community, adopted at Denver, United States of America, in June 1997, regarding assistance in securing the environmental safety of the sarcophagus covering the remains of the destroyed Chernobyl reactor and the allocation of US$ 300 million for a shelter implementation plan;

4. Expresses its appreciation for the contributions made to the shelter implementation plan at the International Chernobyl Shelter Pledging Conference for Governments, held in New York on 20 November 1997, and urges further contributions to the plan;

5. Welcomes the preparation by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, of the inter-agency programme of international assistance to areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster;

6. Welcomes also the convening by the United Nations of a special international meeting on Chernobyl held on 25 November 1997, to generate further support to the populations of Belarus, the Russian Federal: and Ukraine affected by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster and urges them to continue to contribute towards the implementation of the projects specified in the above-mentioned inter-agency programme;

7. Takes note with satisfaction of the establishment in Ukraine of the International Chernobyl Centre, 156/ with the active participation of Belarus and the Russian Federation, as an important step towards enhancement of the capabilities of the international community to study, mitigate and minimize consequences of such accidents and invites all interested parties to take part in the activities of the Centre;

8. Urges the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl to continue efforts aimed at strengthening international cooperation to overcome the health, social, economic and ecological consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in the most affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, based on the inter-agency programme of international assistance to areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster;

9. Calls upon the Secretary-General to continue the regular exchange of information with the countries concerned, relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, with a view to enhancing world public awareness of the consequences of such disasters;

10. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, under a separate sub-item, a report on the implementation of the present resolution.

154/ General Assembly resolution S-19/2 of 27 June 1997.

155/ A/52/537.

156/ Formerly known as the International Scientific and Technological Centre for Nuclear and Radiological Accidents.